



# GAZEBO EXPRESS



YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENT SOURCE FOR THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND • JANUARY 2011

## HIGHLAND CITIZEN CORPS MARKS 5-YEAR MILESTONE

It has been five years and counting for the Highland men and women who volunteer to protect the health and safety of our residents.

"Our town is even better through the efforts of these dedicated volunteers, who love what they do and who are role models for all of us," Council President Mark Herak said. "These individuals give of themselves without expecting anything in return."

Highland's Volunteers in Police Services program is one of five in Lake County and a member of the national initiative. The idea of a citizen corps whose volunteer efforts would make communities safer, stronger and better prepared to respond to emergency situations was espoused by President George Bush in the days and months following the attacks on New York and Washington D.C. in 2001.

Terry Krooswyk and Lloyd Blissmer began their service when the town's VIPS program was launched in 2005. Both joined after attending the Citizens Police Academy.

"We all have our niches and we all do what we can," Krooswyk said. "I enjoy the interaction with the public and the opportunity to give back. Because we do what we do, police are free to do what they need to do."

Blissmer has nothing but praise for the program and the people he works with.

Most evenings, Blissmer can be found out on patrol. "I work five to six evenings a week," he said. "Because I am retired, I have the time to be out there most of the time. Something interesting happens every patrol. We were out




### 4,525 HOURS AND COUNTING ...

Volunteers donated 4,525.5 hours in 2010 alone! Police Chief Pete Hohnicki said VIPS volunteers receive 40 hours of training before performing any solo duty and receive regular on-the-job training. The town has assigned four vehicles for patrol to assist the VIPS as well as bicycles and a retrofitted ambulance to provide mobile access to traffic control and emergency equipment.

VIPS volunteers also save the town cold, hard cash — nearly \$100,000 each year.

The 30-member volunteer contingent provides crowd control, funeral escorts, vacation home checks, residential and business patrols, out-of-state registration warnings, handicap parking citations, fingerprinting, reporting street lights that are not working, answering telephones as well as data entry and filing.

the night they had the fire at the Hampton in Highland apartments helping with traffic control. We helped Munster when they had their flood by patrolling their streets at night. We just do what we can and the town seems to appreciate it." 

### TOWN APPEALS RATES

Two years after Highland joined Dyer, Munster, Griffith and Schererville to successfully constrain planned increases in the cost of electricity from Northern Indiana Public Service Company, the communities are heading back to the bargaining table.

The five communities have jointly hired the London Witte Group to negotiate an appeal of the rates. The total cost to Highland will not exceed \$6,190.

In 2007, the town paid about \$576,000 for electricity, \$232,000 of which paid for street and traffic lights.

### HIGHLAND SELLS BONDS

The Town of Highland sold bonds in December and will have to pay only 1.29 percent in interest on the life of the loan.

The bonds — known as Tax Anticipation Warrants — are sold to allow the town to pay its bills between property tax payments.

For 2011, the town sold \$2.95 million in bonds, which will be repaid before the end of the year. Successful low bidder on the bonds was Centier.

### RAISING THE ROOF

Tons of steel delivered to the Lincoln Center construction site days before Christmas set the stage for the first phase of the project.

Parks Superintendent Alex Brown said he expects the east wing of the project to be under roof by the end of January.

Once the shell and roof are complete, Brown said industrial-grade heaters will allow construction crews to continue to work on interior finishing. "Everything is on schedule and on time."

## SUBSIDIZED TAXI PROGRAM

Highland sponsors a taxi program for seniors and those who are handicapped. Eligible riders can get a half price discount up to \$5. Applications are available at Town Hall, 3333 Ridge Road.

**INFO:** Call (219) 838-1080

## HOT LUNCH FOR SENIORS

A nutrition site is offered for seniors aged 60 and older. Hot lunches are served at 11:30 a.m. for a \$2 donation.

**WHEN:** 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. weekdays

**WHERE:** Lincoln Center

**RESERVATIONS:** Call Dorothy at (219) 838-0114 from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

## YOUR COUNCILMEN



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## NEWS TIP? STORY IDEA?

Send your suggestions to:



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# HIGHLAND NATIVE JIM STANGE NEWEST PARK BOARD MEMBER

Growing up, Jim Stange had always imagined returning to his hometown when it came time to marry and raise a family.

Today the Stange's, Jim and his wife, Michele, have created the life they always wanted for their children – Rachel, Scott and Paige – here in Highland.



**JIM STANGE**

"I was born and raised in Highland. My wife was, too," Stange said. "I went to Purdue and Indiana universities. I work for Health Care Service Corp., which was formed during the Great Depression.

Today, we are the largest not-for-profit health insurer in the country."

In addition to the rigors of a full-time job and raising a growing family, Stange is the newest member of the Highland Park Board.

"My children are involved in sports – soccer, softball, football, baseball, cheerleading and biddy basketball," he said. "I ran in the Pumpkin Plod and we go to Daddy/Daughter dances and play tennis. We participate in as many things as possible here in town."

When a vacancy occurred on the Park Board, Councilman Dan Vassar said Stange was the first person he thought of.

"Jim Stange is exactly the kind of person we were hoping would volunteer to serve on the Park Board," Vassar said. "He and his

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Members of the boards and commissions help shape the town, leaving a legacy that extends beyond their tenure. Boards and commissions that may have openings include:

- Redevelopment Commission
- Board of Sanitary Commissioners
- Board of Metropolitan Police Commissioners
- Water Board
- Park Board
- Plan Commission
- Board of Zoning Appeals
- Main Street Commission
- Council of Community Events
- Lake County Convention and Visitors Bureau

Applications are available at Town Hall or online at [www.highland.in.gov](http://www.highland.in.gov). Return completed forms to the Clerk-Treasurer's Office, 3333 Ridge Road.

family are very involved in the community. They enjoy the quality of life we have here."

Stange couldn't agree more.

"I don't fancy myself as political. I care about our town and our kids. I want them to have as many opportunities and to be involved in the things our town has to offer," he said. "The Park Board suits me. I couldn't have picked a more exciting time to get involved in this board, with the Lincoln Center project already in full swing. What we are doing now will be a legacy we are leaving for future generations of families."

## UNSAFE BUILDING FUND TARGETS EYESORES

A total of \$21,000 has been gleaned from three different budgets to provide seed money for an unsafe building fund.

Councilman Dan Vassar said the council, in cooperation with the Building Commissioner, Plan Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals, found unspent money to begin the program, which will allow the town to work quickly to take down unsafe buildings.

Contenders for available financing are long-vacant commercial properties that have the ability to negatively impact surrounding businesses. The goal: to increase Highland's marketability to existing and new merchants.

Vassar said creating the fund clears one hurdle. Before the town could contract for any demolition, the municipality would need to take title to the property.

"We wanted to find a solution. We are tired of looking at buildings that have been vacant for an extended period of time and are unkempt. It isn't good for our town," Vassar said. "We needed to create a mechanism to address the issue of unsafe and unsightly buildings and we think this program is a significant step forward."

Funds spent on demolition could be recouped when the vacant land is sold.

'It takes all of us working together to keep our community safe'



Back row from left: Acting Cpl. Shawn Anderson (co-coordinator), David Martinez, Ed Babcock, Wally Richardson, Terry Dommer, Mike Johnson, Christine Bell, Dennis Strapon and Chief Peter Hojnicky. Front row front left: Assistant Chief Patrick Vassar, Mary Kenders, Christine Ellis, Greg Broski, Marilyn Thompson, Debbie Fagan, Nancy Alexich, Bernie Zemen, William Tooley and Sgt. John Banasiak (co-coordinator).

## CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY GRADUATES 12TH CLASS

When Wally Richardson heard there was an opportunity to see how Highland's Police Department operates – up close and personal – he didn't hesitate.

Following nine weeks of instruction and hands-on learning, the long-time Highland resident is now a graduate of the 12th Citizens Police Academy.

"In the 1970s, I was a volunteer firefighter and knew almost all of the police. I was eager to see how the department had changed," he said. "Police today have better training, technology and tools than they have ever had. We began and ended our classes with Chief Hojnicky. Everyone made us feel like we were part of the team."

From the ride-alongs to the shooting range to the weekly classes, Richardson said he learned even more than he expected. So did JoAnne Villa and Marilyn Thompson.

"When I did my ride-along, I found out just how uncertain police work is," Villa said. "You never know what you're walking into when you stop a car. I have a better understanding and respect for what the police do and how they handle people."

For Thompson, who has worked in the Highland Police Department for the last five years as a records clerk, the class let her see another side of police work.

"I have always been a big fan of law

### 2011 REGISTRATION

Registration is under way for the 13th Citizens Police Academy in 2011. Classes are held once a week for nine weeks and cover such topics as: Lake County Judicial System, criminal investigations and simulated firearms training.


Participants tour the police department and ride along with an officer. To be eligible, participants must be Highland residents or employed by a business in Highland.

Applications are available at the police department or online [www.highlandpolice.com](http://www.highlandpolice.com).

**INFO:** Call Sgt. John Banasiak or Acting Cpl. Shawn Anderson at (219) 838-3184.

enforcement and this class provided a great overview of how the police work," she said. "Judge Julie Cantrell was one of our featured speakers and she was absolutely phenomenal. She talked about the judicial system and how it works. It was fascinating to find out how things work once a prisoner leaves our town."

Acting Cpl. Shawn Anderson, co-coordinator of the academy, said the goal of every class is to involve interested citizens in learning policing from the inside.

"It takes all of us working together to keep our community safe," Anderson said. "We have been very fortunate we have had so many interested citizens who have taken part in this program. This was an exemplary class." 

### HIGHLAND CRIME WATCH

Learn more about gangs and gang trends at the next Highland Crime Watch meeting.

The featured speaker – a gang intelligence analyst with the Lake County High Intensity Drug Trafficking Agency – will help identify symbols associated with gang activity and answer questions about other tell-tale signs of gangs in the community.

**WHEN:** 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 12

**WHERE:** Highland Public Library, 2841 Jewett Ave.

**INFO:** Please call Acting Police Cpl. Shawn Anderson at (219) 838-3184.

### SPECIAL NEEDS CARNIVAL

Parks and Recreation will host a winter carnival for individuals of all ages who have special needs and abilities.

Park Superintendent Alex Brown said Highland has joined forces with Crown Point, Dyer, Lake County, Merrillville, Munster, Schererville and St. John parks as well as Community Hospital to sponsor functions throughout the area geared specifically for those with special needs.

"What we all learned is that we didn't have enough participants in any one community but that when we teamed together and moved the events to different venues, we were able to put on really special and wonderful events and get great participation," Brown said.

The January carnival will feature a bounce castle, volleyball, basketball, crafts, bingo, face paint and more.

**WHEN:** 1 to 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 23

**WHERE:** Lincoln Center

**INFO:** Visit [www.highlandparks.org](http://www.highlandparks.org) or call (219) 838-0114.

### IDLEWILD PROJECT UPDATE

The project to reconstruct Idlewild Avenue in Brantwood is nearly complete. All that remains to be done is a top coat of asphalt when the asphalt plants reopen in the spring.

The project is part of an ongoing initiative to rebuild local streets that are in disrepair. The reconstruction of Woodward Avenue in Brantwood is slated for 2011.



## WINTER KNITTING CLASSES

This class will teach the basic methods of knitting including: cast-on, knit, purl, cast-off, read gauge, and begin a simple scarf.

**WHEN:** 7:30 to 9 p.m. Tuesdays

**Jan. 11 through Feb. 15**

**WHERE:** Lincoln Center

**AGES:** High school and older (Jr. high with instructor's permission)

**FEE:** \$15 residents / \$18 nonresidents

**NOTE:** Supplies not included: 1 skein Red Heart yarn & 1 set of size 9 needles.

**INFO:** Visit [www.highlandparks.org](http://www.highlandparks.org) or call (219) 838-0114.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL DANCE

Parks and Recreation will host a dance — featuring a DJ — for middle school students in 7th and 8th grades.

**WHEN:** 7 to 9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 14

**WHERE:** Lincoln Center

**FEE:** \$5 at the door

**NOTE:** Participants must show a school ID with photo or a parent must show their photo ID with Highland residency. No participants will be admitted after 7:30 p.m. Parents should pick up their children at 9 p.m. The Highland Middle School dress code will be enforced.

**INFO:** Visit [www.highlandparks.org](http://www.highlandparks.org) or call (219) 838-0114.

## STROKE SCREENINGS

Did you know 80 percent of stroke victims had no apparent warning signs? Ultrasound screenings can help you avoid stroke and they are fast, painless and convenient.

**WHEN:** Wednesday, Jan. 19

**TIME:** By appointment

**WHERE:** Lincoln Center

**FEE:** \$139 includes stroke, vascular disease and heart rhythm tests; \$149 includes stroke, vascular disease, heart rhythm, and osteoporosis screening.

**RESERVATIONS:** Call (800) 690-6313 to schedule your preventative health tests.

## PINEWOOD DERBY

This race is not limited to Boy Scouts or even just boys. This race is open to anyone ages 5 and up. Dads, do you remember your own race days and want to compete again? Moms, would you like to show off your own skills for building a car? Bring your car to the Lincoln Center to race against other Pinewood enthusiasts.

**WHEN:** Friday, Jan. 28

**TIME:** 5:30 p.m. check-in, 6 p.m. races

**WHERE:** Lincoln Center

**FEE:** \$10 residents / \$13 nonresidents

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** Jan. 24

**INFO:** Visit [www.highlandparks.org](http://www.highlandparks.org) or call (219) 838-0114.

# REGISTER NOW TO ... PLAY BALL!

## HIGHLAND LITTLE LEAGUE

Boys and girls can register now for the following divisions: T-Ball, Rookie, Minor B, Minor A and Majors.

**WHEN:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays, Jan. 15 and 22; Feb. 12 and 19.

**WHERE:** Lincoln Center

**INFO:** Call HLL President Dan Vassar at (219) 924-1945

### THE RULES:

- Players **MUST** turn 4 by April 30, 2011 to be eligible to play
- Players **MUST** reside in Highland
- Birth Certificate & Proof of Residency required at registration

## HIGHLAND YOUTH SOFTBALL

Spring and summer sports seasons are just a few short months away and sign-ups are already scheduled.

**WHEN:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays, Jan. 22 and 29; Feb. 12, 19 and 26. 6 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 2

**WHERE:** Lincoln Center

**INFO:** Call HYS Secretary Rebekah Thompson at (219) 902-6010 or email [secretary@highlandyouthsoftball.com](mailto:secretary@highlandyouthsoftball.com) or visit [www.highlandyouthsoftball.com](http://www.highlandyouthsoftball.com)

## HIGHLAND SOCCER CLUB

**WHEN:** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays, Jan. 8, 15 and 22

**WHERE:** Lincoln Center

**INFO:** [www.highlandsoccer.org](http://www.highlandsoccer.org)

**TRAVEL TEAMS:** All players must provide a wallet-sized picture. New players must show proof of age and should expect to purchase a uniform from the club.

**IN-HOUSE TEAMS:** These teams play all of their games in town. The standard uniform is a T-shirt (provided by the club) and black shorts and socks (you provide). Shin guards are required. Soccer shoes are optional.

